

Message Text

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TAGS: ASEC, BGEN, CGEN, UR, US (CRAWFORD, FRANCIS J.)

SUBJECT: CHICAGO TRIBUNE ARTICLE BY CRAIG WHITNEY ON
CRAWFORD CASE

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF ARTICLE BY CRAIG WHITNEY OF NEW YORK
TIMES NEWS SERVICE WHICH RAN ON PAGE ONE OF TODAY'S
CHICAGO TRIBUNE. QUOTE:
FRANCIS JAY CRAWFORD FEELS LIKE THE MOST UNPOPULAR
AMERICAN IN TOWN THESE DAYS, AND IT IS NOT THE RUSSIANS
BUT HIS AMERICAN BUSINESS COLLEAGUES WHO HAVE MADE HIM
FEEL SO.

ON JUNE 12, THE 37-YEAR-OLD BUSINESSMAN WAS DRAGGED OUT OF
HIS CAR TO LEFORTOVO PRISON AND CHARGED WITH VIOLATING
SOVIET CURRENCY LAWS, AN ACCUSATION HE DENIES.

LAST MONTH, HIS EMPLOYER, INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER CO.,
CHICAGO, SUSPENDED DEALINGS WITH THE RUSSIANS FOR AS LONG
AS THE CHARGES ARE PENDING AGAINST HIM.
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BUT OF THE REST OF THE AMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY HERE,
THE STOCKY ALABAMAN SAYS, "MY COLLEAGUES WON'T EVEN
TALK TO ME." HIS ARREST, ANOTHER BUSINESSMAN HERE
CONCEDED, MADE JAY CRAWFORD A PARIAH--AND OTHERS, WANTING

LUCRATIVE CONTRACTS WITH THE RUSSIANS WHATEVER THE

POLITICAL CLIMATE, DON'T WANT TO BE SEEN WITH HIM IN PUBLIC.

CRAWFORD'S CASE AND THE BUSINESSMEN'S RESPONSE TO IT RAISE SOME FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES ABOUT UNITED STATES-SOVIET RELATIONS AT A TIME OF TENSION. ONE OF THEM IS HOW FAR THE RUSSIANS CAN PUSH AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN HERE WITHOUT RENDING THE FRAGILE FABRIC OF TRADE.

CRAWFORD WAS RELEASED FROM LEFORTOVO PRISON IN THE CUSTODY OF THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, MALCOLM TOON, ON JUNE 28 AFTER TWO SOVIET CITIZENS WHO HAD BEEN ARRESTED IN THE U.S. ON ESPIONAGE CHARGES WERE RELEASED FROM A NEW JERSEY PRISON.

CRAWFORD HAS HAD TO RETURN TO LEFORTOVO THREE TIMES SINCE THEN FOR QUESTIONING, AND HE ISN'T ALLOWED TO LEAVE MOSCOW. IF HE IS TRIED AND CONVICTED OF THE CHARGE OF EXCHANGING THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS ON THE BLACK MARKET FOR RUBLES, HE COULD BE SENTENCED TO UP TO 15 YEARS IN A SOVIET LABOR CAMP.

HIS OSTRACISM BY HIS COLLEAGUES HAS INFURIATED THE AMERICAN EMBASSY, ACCORDING TO DIPLOMATS WITH CLOSE TIES TO THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY. THE EMBASSY HAD GONE SO FAR AS TO SUGGEST THAT THE BEST WAY TO GET CRAWFORD FREE WAS FOR ALL COMPANIES HERE TO STOP NEGOTIATING WITH THE UNCLASSIFIED

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RUSSIANS. THEIR RESPONSE HAS BEEN DECIDEDLY LESS THAN FIRM.

THE U.S.-USSR TRADE AND ECONOMIC COUNCIL, A BODY OF AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN AND SOVIET TRADE OFFICIALS THAT WAS SET UP IN THE HEYDAY OF DETENTE, HASN'T EVEN WRITTEN A LETTER ON CRAWFORD'S BEHALF, ACCORDING TO ITS OFFICIALS HERE. "WHAT WE'RE DOING," ONE OF THEM SAID, "IS TALKING TO OUR SOVIET TRADE CONTACTS AND ASKING THEM TO DO WHAT THEY CAN TO RELEASE HIM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE." THE SOVIET RESPONSES HAVE BEEN NONCOMMITAL.

PRIVATELY, CRAWFORD IS BITTER ABOUT THE TRADE COUNCIL'S LACK OF ACTION AND ABOUT WHAT HE THINKS ARE HALF-HEARTED AND CONSCIENCE-SALVING GESTURES IN HIS DIRECTION BY HIS COLLEAGUES--SUCH AS A LETTER URGING DONATIONS OF FOOD TO HIM WHILE HE WAS IN JAIL, WHICH THE AUTHOR DID NOT EVEN SIGN. BUT OF HIS OWN COMPANY, HE SAID, "I FEEL 100 PERCENT SUPPORT FROM INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER."

BROOKS MCCORMICK, THE COMPANY'S CHAIRMAN AND A DIRECTOR OF THE TRADE COUNCIL, PROTESTED TO THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR

TO WASHINGTON, ANATOLY F. DOBRYNIN, ABOUT CRAWFORD'S

TREATMENT. AND LAST MONTH, HE ALSO WROTE TO THE HEADQUARTERS OF 21 AMERICAN COMPANIES DOING BUSINESS IN MOSCOW--NEARLY ALL OF THEM.

MCCORMICK'S LETTER DIDN'T ASK THE OTHER COMPANIES TO DO ANYTHING SPECIFIC FOR JAY CRAWFORD. BUT HE WROTE, "IT WOULD HELP IF YOU WOULD WRITE TO AMBASSADOR DOBRYNIN EXPRESSING YOUR CONCERN FOR THE WELFARE OF YOUR REPRESENTATIVES IN MOSCOW." SOME OF THEM DID, ABOUT HALF A DOZEN, ACCORDING TO A DIPLOMAT WHO CLAIMS TO KNOW.

THE REST, PERHAPS AFRAID OF JEOPARDIZING THEIR ABILITY TO UNCLASSIFIED

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DO BUSINESS HERE, APPARENTLY DID NOTHING.

NOW CRAWFORD, A BACHELOR WHO IS ENGAGED TO A SECRETARY-ARCHIVIST IN THE EMBASSY'S COMMERCIAL SECTION, VIRGINIA OLBRISH, IS AFRAID PEOPLE IN THE U.S.--AND POSSIBLE FUTURE EMPLOYERS WILL BELIEVE THE SOVIET CHARGES AGAINST HIM ARE TRUE AND HOLD IT AGAINST HIM.

"THEY'VE ALREADY TAKEN AWAY ONE THING FROM ME," HE SAID, "THE ABILITY TO NEGOTIATE IN AN EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRY, OR THE SOVIET UNION. I WAS GOOD AT IT. I KNEW THE PRODUCT, I COULD SELL IT, I COULD GET THEM TO BUY, AND THEY'VE TAKEN THAT AWAY.

"TO NEGOTIATE FOREIGN CONTRACTS," HE WENT ON, "YOU HAVE TO BE BONDED, AND TO BE BONDED YOU CAN NEVER HAVE BEEN CONVICTED OF A CRIME. IF I'M TRIED AND CONVICTED

HERE, HOW CAN I EVER NEGOTIATE A CONTRACT FOR ANYBODY AGAIN?"

WHATEVER OTHER COMPANIES MIGHT DECIDE, CRAWFORD SAYS INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER HAS ASSURED HIM THAT WHEN HE GETS OUT OF MOSCOW, HE CAN HAVE ANOTHER POSITION OVERSEAS.

"GINNY AND I HAVE HAD TO PUT OFF OUR WEDDING PLANS," HE SAYS, "AND WE HOPE WE CAN GO BACK TO THE STATES AND GET MARRIED. THEN SHE COULD WORK FOR THE EMBASSY

SOMEWHERE OVERSEAS AND I COULD WORK FOR HARVESTER." MISS OLBRISH WAS DUE TO BE TRANSFERRED FROM MOSCOW NEXT SATURDAY, BUT HER TERM HAS BEEN EXTENDED SIX MONTHS.

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CRAWFORD'S ARREST WAS VIEWED BY THE EMBASSY HERE AS SIMPLY POLITICAL RETALIATION FOR THE ARREST OF THE TWO ALLEGED SOVIET SPIES--CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES OF THE SOVIET MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN NEW JERSEY LAST MAY. CRAWFORD INSISTS THAT HE NEVER CHANGED ANY MONEY ON THE BLACK MARKET, AS CHARGED. "WHAT WOULD I DO WITH 20,000 RUBLES?" HE ASKED. AND HE SAID THAT BOTH THE EMBASSY AND HIS COMPANY HAVE CHECKED HIS FINANCIAL RECORDS AND FOUND HIM STRAIGHT.

CHARGES LIKE THESE ARE NOT UNUSUAL, BUT BEFORE CRAWFORD'S ARREST--WHILE ON HIS WAY TO A COCKTAIL PARTY WITH MISS OLBRISH--THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES HAD ALWAYS DEALT WITH SUCH PROBLEMS QUIETLY. IN MOST CASES, THEY ASKED THE BUSINESSES INVOLVED TO WITHDRAW THEIR REPRESENTATIVES. IN MOST CASES THEY DID.

THREE LEFT IN THE LAST YEAR. A FOURTH, ANTHONY F. TEDESCO OF AMERICAN EXPRESS, DEVELOPED A CASE OF ACUTE ANXIETY AND LEFT SHORTLY AFTER CRAWFORD WAS ARRESTED.

CRAWFORD'S ARREST THREW INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER INTO A QUANDARY. THE COMPANY SENT IN A NEW REPRESENTATIVE, JOHN CHELLMAN, AS SCHEDULED BUT TOOK UNTIL JULY 13 TO DECIDE THAT THE WAY TO DEAL WITH THE CASE WAS TO FREEZE ALL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE RUSSIANS.

CRAWFORD SAYS THE COMPANY WAS NEGOTIATING A 5 MILLION DOLLAR CONTRACT FOR 14 BIG LOADERS AND SPARE PARTS AT THE TIME; IT HAD SOLD AT LEAST 2 HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF TRACTORS, GRADING EQUIPMENT, AND COMPRESSORS HERE SINCE 1972. ONE OF THE THINGS IT IS WEIGHING NOW IS WHETHER TO CLOSE THE MOSCOW OFFICE, SET UP LESS THAN TWO YEARS AGO. BUT THE MAIN THING, A COMPANY OFFICIAL IN CHICAGO SAID, IS TO GET CRAWFORD OUT SAFELY.

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OUTSIDE OF JAIL, HE SAID, HE HAS BEEN SUBJECTED TO HARASSMENT--CHECKS OF HIS DRIVER'S LICENSE FOR NO APPARENT REASON, TRAFFIC TICKETS, EVEN A MENACING ATTACK ON HIS CAR WHILE HE WAS IN IT THE OTHER NIGHT, CARRIED OUT BY YOUTHFUL HOOLIGANS.

HE BELIEVES HE WAS ARRESTED SIMPLY BECAUSE THE RUSSIANS

NEEDED TO DO SOMETHING TO EVEN THE SCORE AFTER THE
UNUSUAL PUBLICIZED ARREST OF THE TWO SPY SUSPECTS IN NEW
JERSEY.

BUT WHAT THE ULTIMATE EFFECT OF THE EPISODE WILL BE ON
U.S.-SOVIET TRADE, AND ON AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN TRYING TO
LIVE AND WORK IN MOSCOW, IS UNCLEAR. THE RUSSIANS HAVE

SAID FOR YEARS THAT TRADE SHOULDN'T BE LINKED TO

POLITICAL QUESTIONS, YET NOW THEY APPEAR TO HAVE DONE THAT
THEMSELVES.

AMERICAN NONAGRICULTURAL EXPORTS TO RUSSIA HAVE SUNK
25 PER CENT THIS YEAR BELOW LAST YEAR'S LEVELS, TO 228.6
MILLION DOLLARS FOR THE FIRST FIVE MONTHS OF 1978, AND
THE RUSSIANS MAY BELIEVE THEY HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BY
INSULTING THE REPRESENTATIVES OF AMERICAN BUSINESS HERE
AT THE MOMENT.

"MAYBE THEY THOUGHT THE BUSINESSMEN WOULD REACT BY
PUTTING PRESSURE ON PRESIDENT CARTER TO LAY OFF ON
HUMAN RIGHTS," A CHICAGO BUSINESSMAN SPECULATED. END QUOTE.
CHRISTOPHER

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